

## Eisenhower, Dwight D.

Dwight David Eisenhower served as supreme commander of Western Allied forces during World War II, chief of staff of the U.S. Army (1945-48), president of Columbia University (1948-50), military commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO; 1951-52), and 34th president of the United States (1953-61). Many controversies still surround his military and political careers, but observers agree that "Ike" was among the most beloved popular heroes of his time.

### Early Life and Career

Eisenhower was born in Denison, Tex., on Oct. 14, 1890. Two years later his impoverished and devout family moved to Abilene, Kans., where he grew up. He attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, graduating as a second lieutenant in 1915. At the academy he was a highly regarded cadet and, until he sustained a knee injury, a star football player who displayed strong qualities of leadership. On July 1, 1916, he married Mamie Geneva Doud, the daughter of a wealthy Denver, Colo., family.

Eisenhower requested, but did not receive, an overseas combat assignment during World War I. Instead, serving at several training camps, he established himself as a first-rate organizer and trainer of men. After the war, along with George S. Patton, he was one of the early advocates of mobile armored tactics. From 1922 to 1924 he was executive officer to Gen. Fox Conner, military commander of the Panama Canal Zone. With Conner's help, he was admitted to the Command and General Staff School, graduating first in his class. He subsequently served on the Battle Monuments Commission under Gen. John J. Pershing, studied at the Army War College, and had a tour of duty in the office of the assistant secretary of war (1929-33).

Widely recognized as an excellent staff officer and first-class writer, Eisenhower was made administrative assistant to Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur in 1933. Although MacArthur was Pershing's chief rival, Eisenhower served him loyally and effectively without alienating Pershing's followers. In 1935, when MacArthur went to the Philippines to take command of the Philippine Army, Eisenhower accompanied him.

### World War II

With the outbreak of the European war in September 1939, Eisenhower returned to duty in the United States. He moved rapidly through several staff and command positions; he became chief of staff of the Third Army in 1941, planning its successful showing in the largest peacetime war games in U.S. history. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (Dec. 7, 1941) he was called to Washington, D.C., to serve under Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, whose trust and confidence Eisenhower quickly won. In June 1942 he was sent to England as U.S. commander in Europe.

Eisenhower did little to determine the grand Allied strategy of World War II. He was primarily a planner, conciliator, compromiser, and public relations figure; but these managerial qualities were essential for the leadership of a vast mid-20th century wartime coalition. A man of democratic simplicity and outgoing warmth, he was regarded also as a tough, decisive military leader. Like most U.S. generals, he favored a strike against the European heartland as soon as possible but acquiesced in the British "peripheral strategy" of clearing the Mediterranean first.

Eisenhower commanded the invasion of North Africa in November 1942. He drew brief but intense criticism when, on the ground of military necessity, he extended recognition to French leaders who had collaborated with the Germans. The North African campaign concluded victoriously in May 1943. It was followed by the conquest of Sicily in July and August 1943 and by the invasion of Italy proper in September—a difficult project that Eisenhower had not favored. Late in 1943 he was named to command the invasion of France, and he devoted all his subsequent efforts to that objective. On June 6, 1944, Allied forces invaded Normandy in a landing unparalleled in the history of warfare (see NORMANDY INVASION). Within ten weeks the Germans were driven from most of France. Eisenhower then ordered a slow, broad advance that enabled the Germans to consolidate their defenses and stage a major counterattack in the Forest of Ardennes at the end of 1944 (see BULGE, BATTLE OF THE). After this German drive was turned back, Eisenhower resumed the offensive. On May 8, 1945, Germany's unconditional surrender became effective.

After World War II, Eisenhower served a term as army chief of staff, wrote his memoir of the conflict (Crusade in Europe, 1948), and served as president of Columbia University. In 1948 he rejected pleas that he run for the Democratic presidential nomination. In December 1950, a time when U.S. troops were retreating in the KOREAN WAR and Western Europe feared Soviet invasion, President Harry S. TRUMAN named Eisenhower military

On 10/10/50, the British Government announced that it had decided to send a mission to the Far East to study the situation in the region. The mission was led by Sir Robert Scott and consisted of several members of the Foreign Office. The mission was to visit the British colonies in the Far East and to report on the situation in the region. The mission was to be completed by the end of the year.

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commander of NATO. Headquartered in Paris, Eisenhower enhanced his reputation as a figure of magnetic appeal throughout the Western world.

#### **Presidency: Election and Domestic Affairs**

Urged by figures in both parties to run for president in 1952, Eisenhower was more receptive to the Republicans, who appealed to his basic conservatism. He allowed the internationalist wing of the party to adopt him as an alternative to the more isolationist candidate, Sen. Robert A. TAFT. Returning to the United States to campaign in the spring of 1952, Eisenhower narrowly won the Republican nomination. In the November election, with Sen. Richard M. NIXON of California as his running mate, he defeated the Democratic candidate, Illinois Gov. Adlai E. STEVENSON, in a landslide; facing Stevenson again in 1956, he would win by an even larger margin. However, the Republicans won Congress by only a few votes in 1952 and were ousted from control in 1954. For three-quarters of his administration, Eisenhower faced a Democratic Congress. Thus his political situation as well as his personal preferences ensured that he would not depart drastically from the policies of his Democratic predecessors.

Eisenhower liked to describe himself as a middle-of-the-roader, and his administration was a relatively faithful expression of the moderately conservative outlook of the U.S. business community. He hoped to balance the budget, hold down inflation, and give the nation efficient, economical government. He opposed any major expansion in the functions of the federal government, but he made no significant effort to repeal established programs in such policy areas as labor, agriculture, and social welfare.

Personally indifferent to the black CIVIL RIGHTS movement, Eisenhower used federal troops to enforce school desegregation at Little Rock, Ark., in 1957; moreover, he signed civil rights acts in 1957 and 1960. He also obtained passage of two massive, but self-financing, federal public works projects—the SAINT LAWRENCE SEAWAY (1954) and the INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM (1956). Solicitous of state rights, in 1953 he signed legislation vesting ownership of tidelands oil and gas deposits in the individual coastal states.

Eisenhower's chief domestic problem was a sluggish economy, characterized by mild inflation, rising unemployment, and periodic recession. The economic problems damaged confidence in the Republican party but did little damage to the president's own popularity.

#### **Presidency: Foreign Affairs**

Eisenhower's foreign policy was built around two powerful appeals: a tough stance in the COLD WAR against communism and the maintenance of peace. John Foster DULLES, secretary of state from 1953 to 1959, was an aggressive anti-Communist and an advocate of the liberation of Soviet-dominated nations. Eisenhower's own instincts were more conciliatory. He hoped to cut military expenditures, and in his 1952 presidential campaign he had promised to end the Korean War.

On the side of peace, caution, and conciliation, Eisenhower followed a number of paths. Having visited the Korean front before his first inauguration, he concluded a truce in July 1953 and thus ended that war without victory. In 1954 he refused to commit U.S. forces to the losing French effort in Indochina (see VIETNAM WAR). He and other Western leaders met with a Soviet delegation headed by Nikita KHRUSHCHEV in Geneva in 1955. This summit conference led to a temporary relaxation of tensions with the USSR, and in 1959, Khrushchev made a friendly visit to the United States.

In 1956, Eisenhower refrained from sending military support to the HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION, which Soviet troops crushed; he also dictated a cessation of hostilities between Egypt and an Anglo-French-Israeli coalition in the SUEZ CRISIS (see also ARAB-ISRAELI WARS). Interspersed with such episodes, however, was a continuation of the cold war. Dulles threatened "massive retaliation" against any Soviet aggression, expressed willingness to go "to the brink" of war, and condemned neutrality. The CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (CIA) covertly established anti-Communist regimes in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954); it also engaged in less successful actions in Indonesia (1958) and Laos (1960) and began to plot against pro-Communist Cuban dictator Fidel CASTRO.

The administration concluded a mutual defense treaty (ratified 1955) with CHIANG KAI-SHEK's Nationalist Chinese government on Taiwan and twice risked war over Communist attempts to occupy the Nationalist-held islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Following the GENEVA CONFERENCE (1954) that partitioned Vietnam, Eisenhower's administration established the anti-Communist government in South Vietnam and developed it as a bastion against

the Communist North. A further step in this direction was the establishment of the SOUTHEAST ASIA TREATY ORGANIZATION (SEATO) in 1954, the first of a series of alliance systems directed against Communist expansion in the underdeveloped world. The United States supported the Baghdad Pact of 1955, which had the same objective for the Middle East (see CENTRAL TREATY ORGANIZATION). In 1957, at Eisenhower's request, Congress authorized possible U.S. military action in that area (the "Eisenhower Doctrine"). In 1958, after the pro-Western monarchy of Iraq was overthrown, U.S. troops landed in Lebanon; they were withdrawn, however, after a 3-month bloodless presence.

During Eisenhower's last two years in office, relations with the USSR deteriorated. The Soviet government threatened to compel U.S. withdrawal from Berlin, and Eisenhower's administration refused to make concessions. In May 1960, on the eve of a critical summit conference in Paris, the Soviets shot down an American U-2 spy plane and captured its pilot. Eisenhower took full responsibility for the espionage, and the Paris conference became a forum for Soviet anger. As the Eisenhower presidency ended, the cold war had intensified and war over Berlin seemed possible.

By then, Eisenhower's health was precarious. The oldest man ever to hold the office of president, he had suffered a major heart attack in 1955, had undergone surgery for ileitis in 1956, and had sustained a mild stroke in 1957. The 22D AMENDMENT to the Constitution prevented his candidacy for a third term, but he remained nearly as popular as when first elected. He supported Vice-President Nixon for the Republican nomination in 1960 and saw him defeated by the Democratic candidate, Massachusetts Sen. John F. KENNEDY.

Retiring to his farm in Gettysburg, Pa., in 1961, Eisenhower wrote several more books: *Mandate for Change* (1963); *Waging Peace* (1965), and *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends* (1967). He died in Washington, D.C., on Mar. 28, 1969.

Instituting no major new policies of his own, Eisenhower had institutionalized the foreign and domestic programs of his Democratic predecessors, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, thereby making them part of a national consensus. The first Republican president since Herbert Hoover, he had brought his party back to a central position in American politics.

Alonzo L. Hamby

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